

would be giving up far more than they would be gaining, and that cost, Mr. Speaker, is just too high.

MISTAKES MADE IN THE WAR WITH IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, in the last press conference, the President was asked if he had made any mistakes and what lessons had he learned. And what the President said was, I wish you had given me this written question ahead of time so I could plan for it. I am sure historians will look back and say, gosh, he could have done it better this way or that way. I am just not sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of this press conference with all the pressure of trying to come up with an answer, but it has not yet.

So kind of as a public service, a number of us are coming down to the floor to offer, for the President's consideration, a list of some mistakes that he might want to call up so he does not have to fumble around for an answer at the next press conference, if he has another public press conference.

One of the things that actually is surprising to me that this mistake happened at all, given what we know now, is the long lead-up to the war in Iraq, that they actually had been planning, and bases were being built, and air space to land was being constructed, was a failure to provide the troops with the protection they needed when they were put into harm's way. It surprises me that that mistake was made.

In some cases mistakes have been somewhat corrected, we think; so it would not even hurt the President to mention the fact that as recently as last October, a quarter of our troops in Iraq were lacking in the ceramic-plated body armor that would deflect the bullets that were coming their way. We are told that that has been corrected, although as recently as just a few weeks ago, families are still buying those at about \$1,500 a crack for their soldiers just to make sure that they are well equipped. But we know that still the Humvees do not have the proper armor, some of them still do not have the proper armor. A helicopter was shot down that did not have the missile detector that helicopters are supposed to have in order to be fully equipped.

□ 1345

I met the aunt of one of the soldiers who died in that last Sunday. She would think that that was a mistake that the President made and something he might want to mention.

He could have talked about a mistake making soldiers pay for their travel home when they would come on rest and recreation, R&R. In order to get to their homes once they were

landed in the U.S., they were paying their own way. That, I understand, has been corrected.

Or we just heard yesterday from the 333rd Military Police Unit in Freeport that was supposed to be coming home this week, that in fact they got redeployed; but all their equipment, their personal foot lockers, had been sent home, and now the families, at their own expense, are shipping the equipment back to their soldiers. They are having to buy all new uniforms. It seems that was a mistake in planning, according to some of the families. Maybe they could have planned better. That is a mistake, and it could be corrected somewhat, at least to reimburse the families that are having to ship back.

But it is not just those soldiers that are in harm's way, who are losing their lives now, unfortunately, sadly, horribly, in record numbers in the last little while; but it is the veterans. Again, it is astonishing that this President would not make sure that at the very least those who come home are well taken care of.

There was a mistake, and it has been corrected. He could cite that. Our wounded soldiers were being charged for food at the hospitals when they came home. Incredible. Now that has been fixed; they are not being charged for that food. But many were languishing with inadequate care in Army barracks when they came home.

Then, right now, this minute, 30,000 veterans are waiting 6 months or longer for appointments at VA hospitals, new increases are proposed in the cost of veterans health care for up to 1 million veterans, and long-term care funding has been slashed. It is really incredible.

What the veterans organizations are saying is that actually the amount of money allocated to veterans is millions of dollars short of what it needs to be. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) actually has a proposal that would add \$2.5 billion for veterans health care. The President could acknowledge that it is a mistake to mistreat our veterans, and he could support the bill of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS) to restore that money.

He could do something about the fact that he has been refusing to end the survivor benefit penalty. There are a lot of things, a lot of mistakes. We think the President ought to acknowledge some of them and fix them up.

ADDRESSING THE SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY PERSONNEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to call attention to a piece of legislation that I introduced, along with

my colleagues, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. JACKSON) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), to address the shortage of medical laboratory personnel, H.R. 623.

The United States is facing a severe and increasing problematic shortage of qualified laboratory personnel. Many rural areas and areas served by smaller hospitals are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified laboratory workers.

The vital role medical laboratory professionals play in health care must be recognized. Between 70 to 75 percent of all medical diagnoses are based on laboratory test results. But because these important health care practitioners seldom have direct patient contact, their important role in health care often goes unnoticed by patients. Ensuring that our Nation's laboratories possess the human resources, that is, laboratory professionals, to accurately process laboratory testing demands is critical to patient health.

The U.S. Department of Labor projects that approximately 13,200 medical laboratory professionals will be needed each year through 2010. Unfortunately, fewer than 5,000 individuals are graduating from accredited training programs each year.

The bill includes a scholarship program to help students meet their academic education and clinical training expenses. It provides for loan forgiveness by working in areas designated as having a shortage of medical laboratory personnel or allied health practitioners. In addition, this legislation establishes a program to provide awards to individuals who teach medical laboratory science.

These are just a few of the important measures created in H.R. 623. I would encourage my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

MISTAKES THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, 8 days ago at the Presidential news conference, only the third he had done in prime time since he has been President, the President was asked just sort of an obvious question that we all deal with from time to time in our lives, political or not, tell us about one of the biggest mistakes you have made.

The President kind of looked a little deer-in-the-headlights and he said, "I am sure something will pop into my head here in the midst of this press conference, but with all of the pressure of trying to come up with an answer, it just hasn't yet."

We would today like to try to help the President, not because we want to criticize President Bush, but because we want to help him learn from his mistakes.

We see several of the mistakes here, from veterans cuts, to trickle-down tax